

FACES IN THE FIRE.

A Comedy,

IN THREE ACTS.

BY

LEICESTER BUCKINGHAM,

(Member of the Dramatic Authors' Society),

AUTHOR OF

The Silver Lining, The Merry Widow, Silken Fetters, Take that Girl Away, For the Benefit of the Playful Crocodile, Two Precious Scoundrels, An Impudent Puppy, The Gentleman Opposite, Do Shake Hands, Drat that Comet, Over the Way, Don't Lend your Umbrella, Cupid's Ladder, A Pleasant Time of it, A Woman in my Dust Hole, So Very Obliging, Quixote Junior, You're Another, The Phantom Wives, The Silver Lining, &c. ; and of the Burlesques of Pizarro, Little Red Riding Hood, Virginius, Lucrezia Borgia, Belphegor, Harlequin Humbug, Harlequin Novelty, William Tell, La Traviata, and Aggravating Sam ;

AND PART AUTHOR OF

The Burlesques of The Forty Thieves and Valentine and Orson.

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LUCY

Scene.—LONDON.

TIME.—PRESENT DAY.

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FACES IN THE FIRE.

ACT 1.

SCENE.—*An elegantly furnished Drawing Room in the House of Mr. Hargrave, at Kensington; opening with curtains looped up, C., shewing another Drawing Room at back; the whole lighted and prepared for a ball; doors R. and L.; small tables R. and L.; arm chair R. of table, R.*

Enter WILLIAM, L., with letters on a salver, which he places on table, R., and exits, L.

Enter HARGRAVE, C.

HARG. (*looking around as he comes down, C.*) Well, though I am the master of the house, I must permit myself to say to myself, that these drawing rooms look charming. Only to think that a man who has knocked about the world, and roughed it as I have, should retire from business at last into such a paradise, blazing with wax lights—not that wax lights are a precisely celestial embellishment; but never mind, the general effect is delightful. I wonder what my wife can be about all this time. (*looks at watch*) She told me she was nearly dressed when I came down stairs, and since then I have read through two evening papers. Oh, these women! It's all very well to call them daughters of Eve, but they certainly don't take after their mother in simplicity of costume. (*sees letters on table, R.*) What have we here? excuses, I suppose, sent at the last moment; that's what always happens when one gives an evening party. (*goes to table, R., takes up and opens letters*)

Enter MRS. HARGRAVE, C., comes down C.

MRS. H. (L. C.) Well, dear, how do you like my dress?

HARG. (R. C.) It's lovely. You'll cause so many heart-aches to-night that remorse will keep you awake for a week to come.

MRS. H. I'm so glad it pleases you; and I haven't been long dressing, have I?

HARG. (*looking at watch*) Positively only two hours and

FACES IN THE FIRE.

*First produced at the Royal St. James's Theatre (under
the management of Miss Herbert), on Saturday,
February, 25th, 1865.*

Characters

CECIL VANE Mr. CHARLES MATHEWS.

ALFRED GLANVIL..... Mr. FREDERIC ROBINSON.

PHILIP HARGRAVE Mr. ARTHUR STIRLING.

CHARLES VERNER..... Mr. H. J. MONTAGU.

THOMAS Mr. BROWN.

WILLIAM

CLARA GLANVIL..... MRS. CHARLES MATHEWS.

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MRS. H. I'm so glad it pleases you; and I haven't been long dressing, have I?

HARG. (*looking at watch*) Positively only two hours and

fifty-three minutes. They may well call this the age of steam; but I have some bad news for you, Alice. (*shews letter*) My young friend, Mowbray, the most indefatigable waltzer of the day, writes to say that he cannot possibly be with us.

MRS. H. Ah! I suppose he is going to the ball which Mr. Aubrey, the banker, gives to-night, at his new house in Eaton-square. Well! When Belgravia beckons, of course poor Kensington must expect to be despised.

HARG. But you need not be alarmed. We shall have so many young fellows who are never tired of dancing, that he won't be missed. There's Mr. Cecil Vane, and Mr Charles Verner, and——

MRS. H. (*quickly*) Are you sure he is coming?

HARG. Who? Mr. Charles Verner?

MRS. H. (*recovering herself*) Oh, no, I thought you mentioned Mr. Cecil Vane.

HARG. To be sure I did. We may count upon him, and I am very glad of it, for he is the life and soul of every company one meets him in;—quite a different sort of person from our friend Verner.

MRS. H. (*coldly*) Will he be here, too?

HARG. Yes; I told him that he must not disappoint us on any account. Poor fellow! he seems so alone in the world that I'm always glad to bring him within reach of something that will cheer him up a bit. (MRS. HARGRAVE *sits*) I shall not soon forget the day when old Singleton, on his death-bed, entreated me to watch over the lad's welfare.

MRS. H. (*with suppressed feeling*) I have been told that Mr. Singleton was a kind friend to Mr. Verner.

HARG. Indeed, he was. But I've done the best I could for the young fellow,—got him a capital situation in the banking-house of Staple and Winslow, and, if he takes care of himself, he'll be sure to make his fortune in the end, for he has an excellent notion of business.

MRS. H. And another good quality besides,—he doesn't disdain to dance, and now-a-days that is becoming a rare condescension. (*rises*) Only, at the last party we gave, I espied an exquisite of the first water, dressed to the highest pinnacle of elaboration, and with such a tiny little bow to his white cravat, that at a first glance he looked as if he had forgotten to finish dressing himself, leaning listlessly against the mantel piece, while three or four charming girls were reluctantly playing wall-flower.

HARG. Of course you laid violent hands upon him at once, and never left him until he was safely deposited in a quadrille?

MRS. H. No; I didn't proceed to such extremities, but I offered to introduce him to one of the deserted beauties, to which

he replied with such an air of languor, "No, thank you, my dancing days are over," and I'm quite sure that he wasn't three and twenty. (*laughing*) Really, if things go on in this way, there will be only one possible remedy—we shall have to contract for a supply of partners, just as we do for the supper and the musicians.

HARG. That's a capital idea!

Enter WILLIAM, L., with a letter, which he gives to MRS.

HARGRAVE, and exits, L.

MRS. H. (*opening letter*) Another disappointment! (*sits, L.—reads*) "My dear Mrs. Hargrave,—Forgive my absence from your party this evening; but I am not in the mood for gaiety, and should be a dismal guest. I fear that my husband will insist upon remaining with me, so you must not be surprised if you do not see him. Ever truly yours,—Clara Glanvil." What can this mean? Oh, some passing whim I suppose.

HARG. No, Alice, depend upon it this is no whim; it is merely a symptom of the fearful moral malady which is embittering her life, and strikes its roots deeper day by day; But, never fear; I am satisfied that Glanvil will be here, and you may rest assured that his wife will not let him come without her.

VANE. (*without*) Ha! ha! ha! well, there's novelty in that *pas seul*, at any rate.

MRS. H. (*rises and crosses to R.*) That's Mr. Vane's voice, his coming first is a happy omen; it augurs a merry evening.

Enter VANE, C., coming down front.

VANE. (C.) My dear Mrs. Hargrave,—enchanted to see you,—permit me, figuratively, to worship the Queen of the Ball on bended knee. If you had been in the other room just now, you would have received my homage in a much less graceful form.

MRS. H. Indeed! How so?

VANE. (*going up and speaking, off C.*) Come along, my young friend, if the Royal Humane Society is not a humbug, it will vote you its largest gold medal.

Enter CHARLES VERNER, C., comes down R. C.

MRS. H. What a tantalizing man you are! do tell us what has happened to you.

VERN. (R. C.) If you had only been there, Mrs. Hargrave—This gentleman had such a comical tumble.

VANE. (L. C.) Well, I won't answer for the comical; but I can vouch for the tumble. (*HARGRAVE, MRS. HARGRAVE, and*

VERNER *laugh*,—*looking at them seriously*) Really, I must say that your compassion for my misfortune is most flattering.

MRS. H. There; you must not be angry with me for laughing: if you had hurt yourself it would have been quite another thing.

HARG. But how the deuce did it happen?

VERN. I fancy Mr. Vane was practising his steps. (*all laugh*)

VANE. (*laughing*) Well, I dare say it must have seemed droll to a looker-on. You see as there was nobody in the drawing room, I went to the glass to give myself a finishing touch, and I felt so buoyant—so positively ethereal, that I could not resist the temptation to try an *entrechat*. It was a triumphant success in the air; but unluckily I reached the floor on a wrong basis.

HARG. Bless me! It must have given you a terrible shaking, and you haven't taken anything?

VANE. I beg your pardon. Took the hand of our young friend here, who came in just in time to help me on my feet again before anyone else arrived.

HARG. You'll need to recover yourself before the dancing begins. Here's an easy chair; come, sit down for a little while.

VANE. Thank you,—not just at present.

HARG. As you please—make yourself quite at home. (*to MRS. HARGRAVE, who has been talking apart with VERNER*) Come, my dear, our guests are beginning to arrive, and we must attend to the duties of hospitality. (*going up and looking off, L. C.*) There! do you see who are just coming in?—Mr. and Mrs. Glanvil.

MRS. H. What! when she said in her letter that——

HARG. You see, I was right. I told you that he would come, and that she would not let him come alone.

MRS. H. We'll leave Mr. Verner in your hands, Mr. Vane; I am delighted he was of service to you, for he is a friend we esteem and love, so in return you must take him under your win, for my sake. Come Philip. (*takes HARGRAVE'S arm—goes up and exeunt HARGRAVE and MRS. HARGRAVE, L. C.*)

VANE. (*going up and looking after her*) For her sake? Bewitching creature! who could resist such an entreaty from such lovely lips? (*SERVANT passes at back with ices*) An ice! that is the very thing I want. (*takes ice to VERNER*) Won't you have one? (*VERNER makes signs of refusal—exit SERVANT*) Perhaps you don't like ices? I'm madly fond of them; the night before last I took twenty-three.

VERN. What a prodigious feat! (*sits at table, L.*)

VANE. (*sits at table, R.*) Not a bit of it. I could have begun again immediately; besides they are medicinal. In the midst of

this exciting London life one needs the constant application of a refrigerator; but perhaps you've not had much experience of town gaiety.

VERN. No, indeed I have not.

VANE. I guessed as much; you've too much freshness about you to have gone through the full racket of even a single season. So you were not born in London?

VERN. (*a little embarrassed*) I don't know.

VANE. That's odd; though after all, you can't reasonably be expected to recollect so early an incident in your career; but I suppose your parents live in the country;

VERN. (*impatiently, and with increasing embarrassment*) I don't know!

VANE. The deuce you don't! You have parents somewhere, of course?

VERN. (*after a slight pause—sadly*) I don't know. (*rises*)

VANE. Well, that's phenominal; but at any rate—(*aside*) No, hang it, under the circumstances, it would be too ticklish to ask him if he knows who was his father.

VERN. You were saying——

VANE. Merely that I fancied I remembered meeting you here early in last year, with a venerable looking old gentleman.

VERN. That was Mr. Singleton, under whose care I was placed, when a mere infant, and whose kindness towards me knew no bounds; but I have been alone in the world since he died, six months ago.

VANE. (*rises—aside, putting ice on table, R.*) He's a foundling, that's clear enough. (*aloud*) Alone in the world? Fiddle-de-dee! you've one kind friend in Mrs. Hargrave, at any rate, and from this day forth you may count upon another, and a warm one too. (*gives VERNER his hand*) Out intimacy had a droll beginning, hadn't it?—but as you gave me a hand when I had fallen on the floor, it's only fair that I should give you a hand, when you're in anger of falling into the blues.

VERN. (L. C.) Ah, Mr. Vane, how I envy you—you are so gay, and light-hearted.

VANE. (R. C.) Well, I certainly do try to get through life as merrily as I can; but don't for a moment imagine that mine is a lot to be envied; on the contrary, my dear fellow, in me you behold a martyr. I'm a victim to a life income of three hundred a year.

VERN. (*laughing*) That must be a very pleasant sort of infliction.

VANE. You think so, do you? It's intellectual and social annihilation. If I had been forced to earn my own living, I should have set about it with a good will, and I daresay I should have made a name in the world; but my dear good-

hearted, misguided old father must take it into his head to leave me this annuity, and what with my small independence and my great laziness here, I am an absolute nonentity.

VERN. But have you no ambition?

VANE. Ambition? Fiddlesticks! Do you fancy I should feel any satisfaction in being Lord Chancellor, to make a precious old guy of myself, in a wig and robes, and be bored to death by interminable speeches of Counsel and sit every now and then in the House of Lords, to reverse my own decisions in the Court of Chancery? or a renowned general to sleep in a tent in damp weather, and catch the lumbago, get a bullet through the lungs in the moment of victory, and be buried in Westminster Abbey?—or a Chancellor of the Exchequer, to be bullied every day in newspapers, for not taking off some tax or another, and wear my brains out every year in trying to make both ends meet for the nation, as if it was not enough bother for any man to accomplish that for himself? No; ambition's all moonshine—that's my opinion. It's a dismal view of life, but the natural offspring of that confounded annuity, which nipped me in the bud, and perhaps lost the world a hero.

VERN. At any rate you might surround yourself with a world of your own. You are not a woman-hater, are you?

VANE. Hate them! bless their little hearts, I adore them. I worship them all in the lump, and individually whenever I can get a chance, and there's nothing that a pair of bright eyes could not make me do, or rosy lips force me to say.

VERN. Then why don't you marry? I've heard people maintain that——

VANE. That where there's enough for one, there's enough for two, eh? Bosh! my young friend, bosh! When number one finds that he hasn't a penny of his income left at the end of the year, he is apt to form a decided opinion, that, with a number two in the case, there would have been an ugly balance on the wrong side. Besides, little accidents might render it necessary, that what was enough for one, should be enough for a half a dozen. No, I have long since given up all thoughts of matrimony, and resolved to make the best of my position, which is not such a very bad one, after all. I adore pretty women, and there are lots of pretty women ready to be adored. Suppose they are married, I only ask permission to bask in the sunshine of their bright eyes, and drink in the music of their sweet voices, and that can't do them any harm. So you see I flit about the world like an abstemious humming-bird. I sniff the perfume of everybody else's sweet blossoms; but I'm not blackguard enough to try to steal the honey. (*goes up to table and eats ice*)

VERNER. I'm glad to hear you say that. So you don't pretend to be a regular Don Juan?

VANE. (*comes down again*) Not a bit of it. I wouldn't be mixed up with the tribe on any account. On the contrary, I glory in thwarting the schemes of truant husbands, and being the safeguard of wives in peril. At this moment I've got an affair of the kind on hand. There's a lovely woman—oh! but one of the most bewitching creatures you ever saw—who is married to a man she idolizes, and she's as jealous of him as she can be. Now, of course, there must be a cause for that—no doubt she has reason to believe that he is playing her false, the vagabond! So what do I do? I establish a flirtation with the wife, which is pleasant in itself, and will also enable me to discover which way her suspicions point, and perhaps to put an end to his intrigues.

VERN. Nothing could be more chivalrous. May I venture to ask who is the lady? (*music without, L. C.*)

VANE. (C.) Certainly not; in all such matters, I am discretion itself. (*going up and looking off, L. C.*) By Jove! here she comes.

VERN. (*crosses R., and looks off L. C.*) What? Mrs. Glanvil?

VANE. Oh! you knew then? (*aside*) I wonder how the deuce he found out who it was I meant!

Enter MRS. GLANVIL, L.C.

MRS. G. (*in great agitation, and looking around her as she enters, L.*) Where can he have vanished to? Perhaps he went this way.

VANE. Mrs. Glanvil! your most devoted——

MRS. G. (*comes down between VANE and VERNER*) Ah! Mr. Vane! I'm delighted to meet you.

VANE. (R.) You really are? That avowal makes me the happiest of men.

MRS. G. (L. C.) You can render me a great service. Find my husband for me; I implore you tell him that the heat, the crowd of this ball, suffocate me, make my head swim, and that I must go home at once.

VANE. Go home at once! surely you can't dream of such a thing, when the ball has only just begun? Besides your husband is probably dancing at this moment. (VERNER *goes up and looks off, L. C.*)

MRS. G. Dancing—with whom?

VANE. I haven't the slightest notion; in fact I only suppose that he is dancing, because——

VERN. Here comes Mr. Glanvil: he is talking to——

MRS. G. Ha! to whom?

VERN. To Mrs. Hargrave!

MRS. G. You are quite sure that it is Mrs. Hargrave?

VERN. Now they are turning back. I will go and tell Mr. Glanvil that you wish to speak to him.

Music stops—Exit VERNER, L. C.

VANE. Surely you can't be serious! The idea of your deserting us almost as soon as you arrive. It's quite sufficient justification for a general insurrection of the entire masculine section of the company.

MRS. G. (L. C., *aside, not listening to him*) To think that he could not stay by my side even for five minutes. I suppose he will say he lost me in the crowd. (*sits, L.*) It is so easy to lose what we do not wish to find.

VANE. (R. C., *aside*) She is, evidently, giving way. Sweet creatures, it's astonishing how easily I can sway them. (*aloud*) Besides, you know, I have a personal interest in the matter. You are engaged to me for a waltz, and a quadrille, and——

Enter GLANVIL, C., from L., comes down.

GLAN. (C.) My dear Clara, what is the matter?

VANE. (R.) Mrs. Glanvil has no sooner entered the house, than she wants to tear herself away.

MRS. G. (L.) Yes, dear, I don't feel well, I should be better at home, so tell them to bring our carriage at once.

GLAN. (*smiling*) Nonsense! it will be time enough to think of that four hours hence.

VANE. Bravo! that's my opinion, for Mrs. Glanvil is engaged to me for a waltz, and a quadrille, and——

GLAN. Don't alarm yourself, you'll find her ready when the time comes.

VANE. It can't come too soon. (*aside*) He seems very anxious to get rid of her—almost thrust her upon me—that's a bad sign, I must have my eye upon him. (*aloud*) Fair lady, the strains of the first waltz will bring me once more to your feet.

Exit VANE, L. C.

MRS. G. (L. C.) You must be mad, Alfred; have I not told you that I insist upon leaving this house immediately?

GLAN. (R. C.) I know you said so, but surely you can't think of committing such an act of childish folly. Talk of being ill and wretched! why, as I passed through the drawing-room just now everybody was remarking how lovely you looked to-night, how brightly your eyes sparkled, with even more than their wonted lustre.

MRS. G. Ah! no one could see the tears which were ready to burst from them when you left me, almost immediately after we entered the room, and hurried to some ladies—old sweet-hearts, I suppose—who lured you to them with meaning smiles.

GLAN. Do you fancy they did? It's a flattering supposition, but I'm afraid it's incorrect. I've a strong conviction that the

two or three ladies I said good evening to, trouble their heads very little indeed about me.

MRS. G. Well, perhaps I was wrong—it will make me so happy to believe it. But then why should you wish to remain here, in the midst of all this crowd?

GLAN. Simply because I enjoy a ball immensely—the lights—the noise—the excitement—the gay dresses—the pretty faces.

MRS. G. (*sorrowfully*) Yes, the pretty faces, which chase from your heart all thought of your poor wife.

GLAN. My dear Clara, don't talk nonsense! Come, come, you need nothing but a dance to shake off this terrible fit of the dismals, and we shall see that by-and-bye, after you've had that waltz with Mr. Vane——

MRS. G. Mr. Vane! I abominate him! an incorrigible flirt, who, because he happens to be upon the best terms with himself, seems to imagine that every woman ought to feel delighted at being deluged with his flood of high-flown flatteries.

GLAN. Indeed! though I have the pleasure of the gentleman's acquaintance, I was not aware of his little peculiarities. He must be rather an amusing character.

MRS. G. Amusing! then if you were to see him following me into corners, pestering me with adulation, and gazing at me all the while as if he were entranced, would that cause you no strong emotion?

GLAN. Certainly it would.

MRS. G. (*overjoyed*) Ah!

GLAN. I should half kill myself with laughing at him.

MRS. G. (*sorrowfully*) That only proves that you do not love me.

GLAN. That's right, the old story over again: Because I'm not madly jealous like yourself, I can't have a particle of affection for you. But you have only yourself to thank for it; I dare say I might have fallen into the same weakness just like many other people, but your example shewed me the absurdity of it, and kept me out of danger.

MRS. G. So, at this moment, because your indifference to my affection makes me wretched, you think me very absurd, I suppose.

GLAN. I think you——well, if you will have it, I think you unbearable.

MRS. G. Alfred! (*sobs, and turns her face to L.*)

GLAN. There! I can't help it. I've been putting the curb on myself for the last four hours; but there are limits to human endurance. First, you go into hysterics at home, because I refuse to stay away from this party; then you insist upon accompanying me, and now that we are here, you begin all your old vagaries over again. If I speak to a woman, you

look as if you could murder her, and I dare not dance for fear you should go off into a fainting fit. Upon my soul, I can't stand it any longer, so if you want to go home, there's the carriage at your service; for my part, I mean to stay here and enjoy myself.

MRS. G. (*sobbing*) It's very cruel, Alfred, to speak to me in that way.

GLAN. So now, I suppose, we shall have a flood of tears, and hysterics, and so forth, and be made the laughing-stock of the whole company.

MRS. G. (*coaxingly*) No, I'll be very good, if you like to remain here, so will I. They were talking just now of making up a whist party, I'm sure you would like a quiet rubber.

GLAN. Yes, you would be very glad to see me settled down for the evening, where there were none but men and dowagers, wouldn't you? I'm much obliged, but the prospect is not exhilarating.

MRS. G. No, it isn't, is it? Well then let us go home, that will be so much more cheerful. (*waltz music without*)

GLAN. I shall do nothing of the sort, and, since you still persist in your childish nonsense, I tell you once for all that I mean to stay here and dance till daybreak.

MRS. G. (*crosses L.*) You will dance, will you? then so will I?

Enter VANE, L. C.

GLAN. (R.) That's right! See, here is your partner.

VANE. (C.) Quick, my dear madam, I beseech you; the waltz has begun, and every bar missed is a drop the less in my cup of nectar.

MRS. G. (*crosses to C.*) I am quite ready, Mr. Vane. (*aside to GLANVIL*) Dear Alfred, come into the room where they are dancing—stand where I can see you. (*GLANVIL turns away from her impatiently*)

VANE. (*aside*) He turned his back upon her with a shrug; decidedly I must have my eye upon him.

GLAN. (*to MRS. GLANVIL, who looks imploringly at him as he is going*) Yes, yes, I will follow you directly.

Reënt VANE and MRS. GLANVIL, L. C.
(*crosses to L., and re-crosses to R.*) Was there ever such intolerable exaction? and every day it's the same thing—jealous suspicions, watching all my movements, fancying that in every look I direct, in every word I speak to any other woman she can detect some token of hidden affection. And this is the realization of my dream of tranquil happiness in a bright home of my own, with a loving wife, whose innocent confiding tenderness should make me look back upon the wild follies of my bachelor days with wonder that I could ever have deemed them pleasure. Oh,

this life is becoming absolutely insupportable! (*Music stops—sits, L., and rests his head on his hand*)

Enter MRS. HARGRAVE, L. C.—comes down.

MRS. H. (R. C.) What! Mr. Glanvil, all alone, and in a brown study! Well, this is an odd way of making yourself agreeable at an evening party! But you seem agitated—what can be the matter?

GLAN. (*rises and comes down, L. C.*) Ah, my dear Alice! I need have no secrets from you—we were boy and girl together, and though we lost sight of each other for a time, yet when we met again the joyous fellowship of our childhood warmed into new and vigorous life in the friendship of our maturer years. Who else could sympathise so keenly in my sorrow? My wife——

MRS. H. Surely you don't doubt her affection for you?

GLAN. Doubt her! Oh, no! I often think I should be happier if she loved me less.

MRS. H. (*laughing*) Well, your grievance has, at any rate, the charm of originality. But you must be joking. (GLANVIL *shakes his head*) No! you are really serious? then you make me uneasy. Tell me, is it your own heart that has changed?

GLAN. (*sits, L.*) No, indeed it has not. I idolize Clara; but her jealousy, absurd, groundless, restless, and indomitable, makes my existence one never-ending torment. Ah! you can little guess what misery may be masked from view by an unruffled brow—you in whose life there is nothing to break the current of its placid happiness.

MRS. H. (*goes to side of GLANVIL*) You think so. How little can we see into each other's hearts! What would you say if I were to tell you that I too have a secret sorrow—one which casts its shadow on my gayest hours?

GLAN. You amaze me! (*rises*)

MRS. H. (*with forced quiety*) Oh, don't imagine that I'm alluding to some personal sorrow of my own; but you know one cannot help sympathising deeply in the afflictions of old and dear friends.

GLAN. So then, it is the misfortune of another that you feel so keenly. (*comes down*)

MRS. H. (R. C.) Yes, and some day I will tell you the whole story; I have often longed to do so, for I fancy your advice might be of service.

GLAN. (L. C.) Why not tell me at once?

MRS. H. What! at a party, in the midst of a crowd of dancers? What an absurd idea.

GLAN. Shall I call on you to-morrow morning?

MRS. C. (*hastily*) No, not here—anywhere but here.

GLAN. Then, why not come to me?

MRS. H. And what would your jealous wife say if she found us closeted together? No, that will never do—but some opportunity is sure to occur.

GLAN. I can find one at once. You have not forgotten your old pensioner in that garret at Knightsbridge?

MRS. H. Well.

GLAN. You remember the morning when, calling to see that poor bedridden woman, who was a servant in my father's family when I was a child, I found you by her side, tending her like a ministering angel. Why not visit her, say, at ten o'clock to-morrow morning?

MRS. H. An appointment with you?—at such a place, too? You must be mad to dream of it.

Enter VANE and VERNER, L. C., and come down.

VANE. (L. C., to VERNER, as they enter) There—don't worry yourself any more. It's all amicably settled; so, there's an end of the matter.

MRS. H. (R., *anxiously*) What is settled, Mr. Vane?

VANE. Oh! nothing, the merest trifle, not worth the trouble of thinking about.

VERNER. (L.C.) Pray, don't make yourself uneasy, Mrs. Hargrave; as Mr. Vane says, it was the merest trifle.

(VERNER, GLANVIL and MRS. HARGRAVE *talk apart*—SERVANT *enters R., and crosses to C. with ices*—VANE *goes up and takes one, watching VERNER*—SERVANT *exit, C.*)

VANE. (*sits at table, L. C.—aside, eating ice*) I don't like the way that young fellow, Verner, looked at Mrs. Hargrave just now. I must put her husband on his guard.

Enter HARGRAVE, L. C.—comes down.

HARG. (L.) Oh! my dear, I've been looking for you everywhere. You are wanted in the other room most urgently, I assure you. Your pretty cousins have just arrived, and they haven't got partners. The situation is a most critical one—at any rate, in their opinion.

GLAN. (*offering his arm to MRS. HARGRAVE*) Will you allow me?

MRS. H. (*going to VERNER, who is standing abstractedly at a little distance from her, and taking his arm*) Thank you, Mr. Verner kindly offered me his arm.

Exeunt VERNER and MRS. HARGRAVE, L. C.—HARGRAVE goes up.

VANE. (*aside, eating ice*) There's Mr. Verner again thrusting himself upon the poor woman, whether she will or no. Oh, this must be put a stop to.

HARG. (*coming down R. C., aside to GLANVIL*) I'm very glad my wife did not need your arm, Glanvil, for you must go and look after your own. She is seeking for you everywhere, and seems in a terrible state of excitement. There were tears in her eyes when I spoke to her just now.

GLAN. (R., *aside to HARGRAVE*) Indeed! I can guess the cause.

HARG. (*aside to GLANVIL*) So can I, for I have passed through the same torture myself. She is jealous, my good friend, and that is a hideous passion—the parent of untold miseries.

GLAN. Yes, to the object of its suspicions; but I'll go at once. Where shall I find Mrs. Glanvil?

VANE. (*quickly, pointing to R.*) I left her a few minutes ago in the card-room, at the end of that passage.

GLAN. Thank you. (*aside*) Now for another half hour of torture. *Exit GLANVIL, R.*

VANE. (L. C., *to HARGRAVE, who is going, C.*) Hargrave, a word in your ear. Beware of Verner!

HARG. (R. C.) Eh?

VANE. I said, beware of Verner! he's a great deal too attentive in a certain quarter.

HARG. You don't mean to say that you have the audacity to suspect my wife of——

VANE. Suspect her! whoever dreamed of such a thing? I know she's an angel; but because an angel happens to wear the petticoats of a mortal, is that any reason why she should be persecuted? I've watched this young fellow, and take my word for it, his looks—his manner——

HARG. Preposterous! he's a mere boy.

VANE. A boy indeed! I should like to know where you find your boys now-a-days, when lads often smoke as companion pictures to fast girls at eight, who sport crinolines—once more I say, beware of Verner!

HARG. Pooh! pooh! your wits must be wool-gathering! (*goes up*) That ice has got into your head, depend upon it.

Exit HARGRAVE, L. C.

VANE. (*comes down C., eating ice*) Has it? well it hadn't stupified me very much just now, when Glanvil asked where his wife was; I told him in the card room there, (*points R.*) and I had just left her in the library there. (*points L.*) Vulgar intellects would call that a lie, but enlightened minds style it a stratagem. (*finishes ice*) It was all from a good motive though. Unless I can get a little chat with Mrs. Glanvil alone, I shall never find out who her reprobate of a husband is running after, and if I don't know that how can I stop him from urging on his wild career? Besides, there's the additional

satisfaction of flirting with a very pretty woman; but that's a perquisite. (*goes up and puts ice glass on table*)

Enter MRS. GLANVIL, L. C.

MRS. G. (L. C.) Not here! (*comes down*) I expected as much—and yet they told me—ah! every one is conspiring to keep me from him.

VANE. (L. C.) You seem to be looking for something, my dear madam; or is't for somebody? Command my service, I entreat you, and let one glance of your bright eyes be my reward.

MRS. G. (*aside*) Mr. Vane again! The man is a perfect nightmare. (*goes up, C.*)

VANE. (*aside*) Sweet creature! her innocence takes fright at my ardour; I must be less demonstrative. (*follows her up—aloud*) I think you said——

MRS. G. (*comes down again*) Excuse me, sir, I said nothing. I am looking for my husband.

VANE. (*following her down*) What! still? He doesn't seem very anxious to allow you to find him. (*aside*) That's another stratagem. (*aloud*) But alas! Mr. Glanvil is not the only possessor of a peerless treasure who seems unconscious of its worth.

MRS. G. (R. C.—*sadly*) You too, then, have noticed his cruel coldness?

VANE. (L. C.—*getting animated*) He is not the only one who neglects the divinity he is bound to worship that he may pay his homage to inferior idols.

MRS. G. (*quickly*) Mr. Vane, you have seen my husband flirting with some one?

VANE. I beg your pardon, I don't think I said so, did I?

MRS. G. No matter; you know you have! Who was it?

VANE. I assure you, I haven't the slightest recollection of——

MRS. G. Don't attempt to hide the truth from me, for I will know all. Where was he?

VANE. Your husband? here, in this room.

MRS. G. But not alone?

VANE. Mr. Hargrave was with him.

MRS. G. (*impatiently*) Mr. Hargrave? (*coaxingly*) Don't you think you remember his speaking to a lady?

VANE. To be sure I do; he was talking to Mrs. Hargrave when I came in.

MRS. G. Yes, yes; but the other?

VANE. What other?

MRS. G. Ah, you don't choose to tell me; I see you are leagued with them all against me.

VANE. (*aside*) Well, this is droll! I thought I should get some information out of her, and she has been doing nothing but pump me; but I'm sure she must suspect who is her rival.

MRS. G. Where is he now—who is he with?

VANE. Upon my word, I haven't the remotest idea; but I'll go and see, if you particularly wish it.

MRS. G. Do; and render me this service—not only now, but always: watch him, play the spy upon all his movements, and when you know that he has left his despised wife at home alone that he may bestow his time upon her rival, come to me. I shall then learn how to unmask his perfidy.

VANE. Bewitchingly fascinating creature! it shall be done. (*aside*) Well, this is a nice profession I've embraced! but as Glanvil is going to the bad, it is clearly my duty to find out what track he is on, and stop him; and then what a host of delightful interviews I shall have, all alone with the bright eyes—an interminable vista of perquisites! *Exit VANE, L. C.*

Enter GLANVIL and MRS. HARGRAVE, door R.

MRS. H. (C., *not seeing* MRS. GLANVIL, *and who has gone up*, C.) No, no, indeed I cannot—will not meet you there.

GLAN. (R. C., *not seeing* MRS. GLANVIL) Nonsense! your scruples are absurd, and you may have to wait months for an opportunity. (*sees* MRS. GLANVIL—*aside*) Clara here!

MRS. G. (*comes down*, L. C.—*aside*) Mrs. Hargrave! so it is she who has stolen from me my husband's heart!

GLAN. (*aside, looking at* MRS. GLANVIL) How her eyes flash with fury!

MRS. H. You see, my dear Mrs. Glanvil, I have brought you back a truant. I found him entangled in the midst of a bevy of dancers.

MRS. G. Indeed! It was a pity to disturb him when he must have been so happy.

GLAN. On the contrary, Clara, I assure you I have been looking for you everywhere. I fancied you must be lost.

MRS. G. (*ironically*) And the bare idea of such a calamity made you wretched, didn't it? But it's astonishing how elastic some people's spirits are; yours seemed to have quite recovered from the blow before you saw me. Now I look at you again, though, you do seem a little agitated.

GLAN. What a wild fancy!

MRS. G. (*goes to C.*) Don't you think so, Mrs. Hargrave?

MRS. H. (*laughing, crosses to L. C.*) Well! I can't say that I perceive any trace of——

MRS. G. No, perhaps not. You would probably be the last person in the world who would care to notice it. (*goes up—noise and laughter without*)

GLAN. (*going to MRS. GLANVIL, and trying to pacify her*)
Clara! (MRS. GLANVIL *turns away from him angrily*)

MRS. H. What can be the meaning of all this uproar?

(*renewed laughter without*)

Enter VANE, L. C.—comes down.

VANE. (C., *speaking off as he enters*) Oh! it's all very well to laugh, but somebody will have to pay for this, and dearly too, I can tell you.

MRS. H. (L.) Do tell me, Mr. Vane, what is all this turmoil about?

VANE. Oh! it's all over now, but if I had not been there, your friend Mr. Charles Verner would have received the most tremendous box on the ear.

MRS. H. (*anxiously*) Mr. Verner! But how did it begin?

VANE. You see it all arose out of his quarrel with that pompous, pig-headed young idiot of a coxcomb in spectacles, Mr. Arthur Winslow.

MRS. H. What! the brother of one of the partners in the house where Mr. Verner is employed? That is very serious; but do tell me all about the whole affair.

VANE. Well! you know—But I forgot—you don't know anything about the beginning of the row that was early in the evening, when Mr. Arthur Winslow carried off, and danced with a young lady, who for that particular waltz was engaged to Verner. I took that little matter in hand, and I fancied I had made it all right—but nothing of the sort, for a few minutes ago the two met, and Verner, who, it appears, has a large spice of the devil in him—not that I like him a bit the less for that—insisted that his rival, who is about a foot taller than he is, and as muscular as a prize fighter, should make him an immediate apology.

MRS. H. (*anxiously*) Well, and Mr. Winslow?

VANE. The idiot in spectacles. He made some very insulting observations about the paucity of roots to our friend Verner's genealogical tree—in fact, he was doing so just at the moment I arrived on the scene of action. Verner responded by some personal remarks on Mr. Arthur Winslow, which were awfully offensive, and he would have been replied to by such a thundering box on the ear as it is the lot of few mortals to receive, if I had not got into the centre of the group at the critical moment, and saved him from the threatened insult.

GLAN. (*who has been talking apart to MRS. GLANVILLE, and vainly endeavouring to appease her*) You separated them—I am very glad to hear it.

VANE. Nothing of the sort. By Jove, if Mr. Winslow's

sight is weak, the defect does not extend to his fists. I blushed crimson on the spot.

GLAN. What, with indignation?

VANE.—No—with inflammation.

(MRS. H. *goes up and looks off*, L. C.)

GLAN. Why, you don't mean to say that you——

VANE. Indeed I did, though. I thought it would have knocked my head off.

GLAN. (*laughingly*) What a comical incident.

VANE. You think so? Well, so everybody said; though I could not exactly see it in that light myself. But, let Mr. Arthur Winslow look out; the next time I catch him out of doors I'll settle his account for him without asking him for a stamped receipt.

(MRS. HARGRAVE *comes down* C.)

Enter HARGRAVE, bringing in VERNER, L. C.—they come down C.

HARG. (R. C.) Come along my young friend; don't talk any more rubbish about vengeance. It was not you who received the blow.

VANE. Certainly not; I can testify to that. (SERVANT *passes at back with ices* R., *goes* C.—VANE *goes up and takes one*—SERVANT *exit*)

VERN. (L. to MRS. HARGRAVE) How can I forgive myself, madam, for having been the cause of such a disturbance in your house.

MRS. H. (L. C.) Oh! don't think of that; it was not your fault, you know. But the matter will end here, I hope.

HARG. End here! of course it won't, Mr. Verner will be discharged from Staple and Winslow's, that's inevitable, and as the cause of his dismissal is sure to become generally known, I fear it will be impossible to get him into any other London banking house. (VANE *makes signs to HARGRAVE, pointing to MRS. HARGRAVE*) Hum! well, perhaps a change of scene will be all the better for him, so I shall ask Glanvil to give him a letter of recommendation to his brother, who is at the head of one of the first firms in Melbourne. (*goes* L. C., *and talks apart with VERNER, who is L.*)

MRS. H. (C. L., *goes to GLANVIL, aside*) I must speak to you alone, without delay.

GLAN. (L., *aside to MRS. HARGRAVE*) But when; where?

MRS. G. (R., *aside*) What can she be whispering to him? (*aside to VANE, pointing to them*) Listen!

VANE. (R. C., *aside to MRS. GLANVIL*) Ah! to be sure. (*aside*) It's part of my new duties. (*listens*)

MRS. H. (*who has been reflecting for a moment, aside to GLANVIL*) At our old pensioner's, at Knightsbridge, to-morrow morning.

GLAN. (*aside to MRS. HARGRAVE*) At ten o'clock.

MRS. H. (*aside to GLANVIL*) I will be there.

MRS. G. (*aside to VANE*) Well!

VANE. (*who has overheard the dialogue between GLANVIL and MRS. HARGRAVE*) I'm dumbfounded. (*Act drop quick*)

HARGRAVE.
MRS. GLANVIL.

VERNER.
VANE.

GLANVIL.
MRS. HARGRAVE.

END OF ACT FIRST.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*A Drawing Room at Mr. Glanvil's, in Berkeley Square ; doors C., R. and L. ; window in recess with curtains in the angle, R. ; fireplace in the angle, L. ; clock on mantel-piece ; table and chairs, R. ; sofa, L.*

Enter GLANVIL, through door R.

GLAN. (*speaking off as he enters*) Bring my hat and gloves ; I am going out directly. (*comes down, C.*) What secret can this be which Mrs. Hargrave wishes to confide to me ? Her manner when she spoke of it was strange, and her sudden proposal of the very meeting which she had refused was stranger still. (*crosses, L.*) However, the mystery will be solved in an hour ; and, even if I had a less powerful attraction than the prospect of being of service to an old and dear friend, I should be glad of any excuse for escaping from my own home, which Clara's jealous doubts and absurd suspicions render insupportable. (*goes up*)

Enter THOMAS, R., with hat and gloves, which he places on table.

That will do. If Mrs. Glanvil should ask for me, you can tell her I have gone—to my solicitors. (*comes down, R. C.*)

Exit THOMAS, C.

Enter MRS. GLANVIL, L.

MRS. G. (*who has overheard the last words, coming down, L. C., and putting her arm through GLANVIL's*) Will she believe it ? (*GLANVIL withdraws his arm and turns away impatiently*) What, still cross ? It's very cruel to bear malice so long about such a trifle.

GLAN. (R.) So you call it a trifle, do you ? when you spoilt the pleasure of the entire evening, and made me look infinitely ridiculous.

MRS. G. (L., *leaning on his shoulder*) Well, there, I admit I was very naughty; but forgive me this time, and I'll promise to behave so much better in future.

GLAN. You have said the same thing scores of times, Clara, and the words have scarcely been uttered, before some wild fancy has served you as the pretext for a fresh outbreak. No, I fear you are incorrigible. (*crosses to L., takes newspaper, sits on sofa, and reads*)

MRS. G. (L. *of and leaning on sofa*) Ah! yes, I know you think it all whim, caprice; but you ought not to scold me, Alfred, for indeed I deserve your pity. (*sits on footstool, L. of GLANVIL*)

GLAN. (*without looking at her*) Pity! what for, I should like to know?

MRS. G. Can you ask me, when I am wretched only because your love is dearer to me than my life? I may seem unreasonable, but when I see you talking to another woman, I tremble lest you should be fascinated by her smiles. I long to tear you away from her, to keep you always with me here alone.

GLAN. (*without looking at her*) Thank you; that would be a pleasant prospect for the remainder of my existence.

MRS. G. Besides, I have good reason to be uneasy, for I know that you are not proof against the charms of bright eyes and pretty faces.

GLAN. (*without looking at her*) I'm sure I don't know what right you have to say so.

MRS. G. What! do you think I have quite forgotten those happy days before we were married, when you used to gaze into my eyes and tell me that they beamed joy into your heart, when you hung upon each word I spoke, and said there was sunshine in my smile. (*sighing*) But, I suppose, I must have greatly altered since then.

GLAN. (*who has laid down his paper, and looked at MRS. GLANVIL during the last speech, aside*) Altered! she is lovelier than ever!

MRS. G. Still, dear husband, if the beauty which please you has faded, the heart you won is unchanged, and always throbs with delight when you are near.

GLAN. (*putting down newspaper, and embracing her*) I know it, darling Clara! Do not fancy that I have ever doubted your affection, and if you were always in this mood, my life would be one of unceasing happiness. But you must own that you often try my temper sadly.

MRS. G. Well, perhaps I do, and sometimes when I have made myself very miserable, indeed, it has turned out that I have been labouring under the most absurd delusion. Do you know, Alfred—I'm half ashamed to make the avowal, but I'm

sure I shall feel happier when I've told you—once I went so far as to play the spy upon you.

GLAN. Indeed!

MRS. G. Yes, I know it was very wrong, dear; but you used frequently to go out alone, and on two or three of these occasions I heard that you had been seen at Knightsbridge. I questioned you—you told me that you had been to visit an aged cripple, who was your father's servant; but I did not believe you until I had the evidence of my own eyes. How heartily I laughed then at my mad suspicions.

GLAN. You followed me there?

MRS. G. Yes, it was very naughty, I know, but the poor old woman had no cause to regret it, for it gained her a new friend. There! I know what you are going to say—that this ought to have been a warning to me against doubting you again. Well, so it ought, and it shall be for the future. I mean to be so trustful, and, now that you have quite forgiven me, we will make a beginning of our new and happier life, by spending a delightful day together. (*rises and sits on sofa and kisses him*)

GLAN. With all my heart. This afternoon we will take a drive in the Park, and we'll go to the opera in the evening.

MRS. G. And you'll stay at home with me all the morning, won't you?

GLAN. (*a little embarrassed, but with assumed indifference*) Certainly, after I come back; I must go out for half an hour.

MRS. G. Oh! no, you need not? (*coaxingly*)

GLAN. I assure you I must.

MRS. G. Well, then, I shall accompany you.

GLAN. Is this the way you shew your new-born trustfulness?

MRS. G. You'll let me go with you, won't you?

GLAN. Certainly not!

MRS. G. But I insist upon it!

GLAN. (*rises*) Clara!

MRS. G. Now I see it all. I can guess what you were planning in your whispered conversation at the ball last night. (*rises and crosses to R.*)

GLAN. Whispered conversation? I held none.

MRS. G. (R. C.) What! not with your new love—an old one, maybe, for aught I know—Mrs. Hargrave.

GLAN. (R. C.) Those words, Clara, are an insult both to your husband and to your friend. I have nothing more to say to you. (*going*)

MRS. G. (*detaining him*) How impatient you are, you scarcely deign to listen to me, your thoughts are, evidently, far away; and while I am striving to keep you by my side, you are eagerly seeking some excuse for leaving me. But this time

you shall not elude me: you shall not go out this morning unless I go with you.

GLAN. I shall go, but alone. I forbid you to leave the house.

MRS. G. So you will play the tyrant, will you?

Enter HARGRAVE, C., comes down.

HARG. (R. C.) My dear Mrs. Glanvil—(*stops, looking at GLANVIL and MRS. GLANVIL*) But I really ought to apologize, for I'm afraid I'm interrupting some domestic discussion.

GLAN. (*shaking hands with HARGRAVE*) Not a bit of it.

Enter THOMAS, R.

What can have put such a notion into your head? (*to THOMAS, who has come down, R., and stands near him*) Well, what is it?

THOM. There's a person waiting in the library to see you, sir.

MRS. G. (*quickly*) Indeed! And who is this person?

THOM. It's a young man, ma'am, he said that Mr. Glanvil would not know his name.

MRS. G. (*reassured*) Oh! it's a young man, is it? (*crosses to HARGRAVE*)

GLAN. (*to THOMAS*) You should have told him I was engaged. You knew that Mr. Hargrave was here.

HARG. (C.) Pray don't stand upon ceremony with me. Besides, I came to have a little chat with you about my young friend, Verner, and took the liberty of telling him to meet me here; so go and attend to your business, and as soon as Verner makes his appearance, we will come to you in the library. (*turns to MRS. GLANVIL*)

THOM. (*aside to GLANVIL*) The young man has brought a letter from a lady, which he was to deliver only into your own hands.

GLAN. (*aside to THOMAS*) Very well; I will go to him.

Exit THOMAS, C.

(*aloud to HARGRAVE*) Well, since you are kind enough to excuse me, I will leave you for the present in Clara's hands. I have no doubt she will take good care of you. (*as he is going, R., he is about to take his hat from the table; MRS. GLANVIL lays her hand upon it, and looks at him imploringly; he shrugs his shoulders impatiently, and exit, R.*)

MRS. H. (*aside, sinking in chair, R. of table, R.*) That angry look! and all because I wish to keep him by my side. It's evident enough that he no longer loves me. (*aloud to HARGRAVE, who is seated L. of table*) I know I am terribly dull company to-day, Mr. Hargrave, but you really must forgive me, it is in spite of myself, I assure you.

HARG. Pray don't trouble yourself about me, my dear

madam, or you'll make me feel that I am in the way. But I'm grieved to see you so ill at ease, so nervous, so low spirited, (*rises and crosses to L.*) just as you were at our house last evening, for I watched you closely, and I know the symptoms well. You must have suffered terribly, I am sure. (*re-crosses to table, R., and sits on chair, L.*)

MR. G. Oh, yes; indeed I did.

HARG. And you are still writing under the same torments. It's very sad, but I must tell you frankly that I feel for your husband more than I do for you.

MRS. G. For my husband? What can have induced you to imagine that he deserves your compassion?

HARG. It's no imagination, I assure you. I dare say you will think me a meddlesome fellow, but I wish to see you both happy, and the ties of friendship between us are strong enough to justify me in giving you a kindly warning. I know, from his own lips that Glanvil is wretched, and that it is you who are the cause.

MRS. G. What! when his conduct makes desolate the home which I dreamed would be happy.

HARG. Bless me! you don't mean to tell me that you have found out that he is false to you?

MRS. G. No, no; I did not say that. I know nothing positive; but the fear that at some moment the horrid truth may flash upon me, haunts me without ceasing.

HARG. Well, you must forgive me for speaking my mind bluntly, but you seem to be hanging your husband summarily, with the intention of trying him by-and-bye, in case any evidence should happen to turn up against him. Really, this is sheer infatuation.

MRS. G. It may seem so to you, but that is because you have never loved as I love, because you never felt such anguish as mine.

HARG. Take care; you are treading on perilous ground, and awakening recollections which I should like to leave slumbering for ever. Why there was a time when I was as great a——no, that's not precisely what I meant, but when I was as jealous as you are, as fanciful, as suspicious; but luckily I saw my folly before it was too late, and resolved to struggle against the passion which was making my life intolerable.

MRS. G. Struggle against it? impossible!

HARG. Not a bit of it, for I conquered. Ah! my old enemy would find it a tough job to get the better of me now.

MRS. G. What! even if it were whispered to you that a rival had supplanted you in your wife's heart.

HARG. (*rises—violently*) A rival! I should kill him like a dog! (*recovering himself*) But there, what am I talking about?

You see how dangerous it is to stir the seemingly dead embers of an old vice, there may be a spark still glowing beneath the ashes.

MRS. G. So your victory is not so complete as you fancied, after all? but even if it were, your heart has never passed through such trials as mine.

HARG. You are right there, they have not been such as yours, but a great deal more severe. You worry yourself into a fever with groundless suspicion of a husband who loves you, and passes his life in heaping upon you proofs of his tenderness. What would you have done, if from the day of your marriage you had found him callous to your smiles, indifferent to your tender words, shrinking from your presence, as if he regarded it with abhorrence? (*sits*)

MRS. G. Oh! a week of such a life would kill me!

HARG. Yet, for many wretched weeks, nay, for many hideous months, that life was mine. I had known Alice since she was a child. I had watched her as she grew lovelier year by year, and friendship was slowly, but surely ripening into love, when a malicious trick of fortune tore me suddenly away from her. I received intelligence that my partner, who managed the Calcutta branch of our house, had absconded. Bankruptcy was staring me in the face, and there was nothing for it but to start at once for India. It was three years before I saw old England again, and meanwhile I had learned that my affection for Alice had been a mere passing dream.

MRS. G. But when you returned and saw her again——

HARG. Then my heart at once resumed its old allegiance. When I left her, her father was rich; I came home to find him all but a beggar. But that was nothing, it only added to my joy to be able to give her wealth as well as love. (*rises*)

MRS. G. And she had not forgotten you? (*rises*)

HARG. (L. C.) It seemed not, for she accepted my hand, and made no resistance to my impatience for our speedy marriage. I fancied that her manner was strange, not to me alone, but to all around her; but her father laughed at what he called my silly delusions. We were married, and that was the beginning of my misery.

MRS. G. (R. C.) Indeed!

HARG. Alice's behaviour to me was incomprehensible. She avoided me whenever she could find a pretext—the sound of my voice, even of my footstep, seemed to put her in a tremble; in her sleep she muttered broken ejaculations, from which I could gather no sense, but which showed plainly enough that she was oppressed by some terrible secret. Then my jealousy broke out with savage fury. I watched her incessantly. I fancied I saw a rival in every man to whom she spoke a

friendly word, or who was greeted by her with a courteous smile.

MRS. G. Oh! how well I know the misery of such doubts and fears. And did you discover who was weaning your wife's heart from you?

HARG. Yes; but it wasn't any one of those I had suspected. At first I played the despot—in fact I may say the demon. I compelled her to give up all society; I was harsh, petulant, exacting—in a word, I acted just as if I had made up my mind to break her heart, in order to find what was inside it. She submitted without a murmur to all my petty tyrannies, but I could feel that she shrank from me more and more. At last, one day, I said to myself—"Philip Hargrave, my friend, you're an idiot—you are behaving to this poor girl like a fiend, and you expect that she will recompense you by being an angel; you sow the seeds of tears, and imagine you are going to reap from them the fruits of love. Then I had a grand battle royal with myself, and, I am happy to say, that the better part of me beat the other hollow. So I turned over a new leaf at once—no more spying and moroseness, no more conjuring up ugly spectres, but instead, honest truth and hearty love. I've stuck to that ever since, and what's the result? Why, that my wife doats upon me, that my home's a Paradise, and that I'm the happiest man in London.

MRS. G. I feel that you are right, and, time after time, I have tried to conquer my weakness, but it's all in vain; the next moment it comes over me again as strongly as ever.

HARG. That's because you go to work the wrong way. Jealousy! It won't do to try and conquer it—that is admitting the possibility of a failure. Just hit it a sound mental blow—knock it out of time, and for ever afterwards take it for granted that it is dead and buried. Be warned, my dear Mrs. Glanvil; you had better mind what you are about. Take example by me. (*she sits, R.*) My little history began with indifference, and has ended in love—yours began with love, but, if you don't take care, it may finish at my starting point.

Enter VERNER, C.

VERN. (C.) I hope I'm not intruding, Mrs. Glanvil. Mr. Hargrave asked me to meet him here.

MRS. G. (R. C., *rises*) Intruding! certainly not. You ought to know that we are always glad to see you. (*shakes hands with VERNER*)

VERN. You are too kind to say so; but this is such an early hour for a visit.

HARG. Early, do you call it? Why, my dear fellow, you are ever so much behind your time. You need not apologise,

for you have given me the opportunity of enjoying a very pleasant conversation, and one which I hope will not be without good fruit.

VERN. We had better go to Mr. Glanvil at once, for I believe he has some important engagement this morning—in fact, Mr. Cecil Vane, who met me on my way here, told me he was quite certain that I should not find Mr. Glanvil at home.

MRS. G. (*quickly, going to VERNER, L. C.*) What did Mr. Vane tell you?

HARG. (*quickly, pushing VERNER towards door R.*) You are quite right, we must make haste. There, that is the way.

Exit VERNER, R.

(*to MRS. GLANVIL*) Be advised by me, follow my example. (*at door R.*) Have faith, for with faith and love, we can make earth a foretaste of heaven.

Exit HARGRAVE, R.

MRS. G. (*after a slight pause, C.*) Yes, I will follow his advice. I will crush my doubts, close my heart against all suspicions, for if I do not conquer them, he may learn to hate me—hate me! when his love is to me all the world! No, he shall never have cause again to complain of my mistrust. He may go out whenever he pleases, unquestioned, and to shew him how completely I have cured myself of my folly, I will take him his hat and gloves now. (*takes hat from table, R., and is going, R.*)

Enter VANE, C.

VANE. (*putting his head in at door*) It's past ten o'clock—he must be gone by this time.

MRS. G. (*starting and turning round*) Mr. Vane, so early in the morning, and stealing into the room after this fashion!

VANE. (*coming down, L. C.*) Well, I must admit that my entrance has a slightly burglarious appearance; but calm your apprehensions, I have no graver criminal intent than to commit larceny of a smile. You see I thought it was useless to go through the formality of sending up my card, for I knew that the moment you saw me you would understand what had brought me here.

MRS. G. Really, you paid too high a compliment to my penetration.

VANE. Why, you don't mean to say that he's here.

MRS. G. Hwe? ho?

VANE. Who? Your husband, to be sure.

MRS. G. So, then, you knew that——

VANE. That he was going out this morning to meet somebody you would much rather he didn't meet? Of course I did, and, you remember, you told me that whenever I was certain he was absent on such an errand I was to come to you directly; so, here I am.

MRS. G. Yes, yes, I understand; but don't speak so loud.
(*goes to door, R., and closes it*)

VANE. I won't speak at all, if you prefer it; so long as I can look at you and listen to you, I shall be perfectly content.

MRS. G. (*coming down R.C.*) Now, tell me, was it not at the ball last night that you heard him make the appointment for this morning?

VANE. Stop a minute; you really must excuse me, but you are going a trifle too far. I'm quite willing to look after your husband—to do all I can to prevent him from going to the bad—to accomplish all the gigantic tasks you may choose to set me, and, above all, to have any number of quiet little chats with you all by ourselves; but, I must decline to undertake the functions of a private detective.

MRS. G. You are bound to tell me the whole truth, and it is useless to deny that you know who this woman is, and where he is going to meet her.

VANE. (*a little alarmed*) Where he is going to meet her? So then, he isn't gone yet?

MRS. G. Yes, yes; I tell you he is. Do you think I should be here alone with you, questioning you about him, if he were at home?

VANE. Of course not, and I am alone with you; there's not a doubt about it—delicious privilege. (*aside*) I don't know how it is, the prospect of this seemed to me rapturous; but now, I've got the reality, I rather wish I was out of it. (*aloud*) Delicious privilege.

MRS. G. You need not fear to speak frankly, Mr. Vane, I know all.

VANE. You don't say so! (*aside*) Fiddle-de-dee! I'm not to be taken in by that stratagem (*aloud*) Well, but in that case——

MRS. G. (*sits on sofa, L.*) Come, sit down here.

VANE. What on the sofa, close to you? Extatic bliss! (*aside*) I'm beginning to feel uncomfortable; if I don't take care I shall be getting out of my depth. (*aloud*) Extatic bliss! (*sits on sofa*)

MRS. G. Now, go on, you see I am listening to you calmly.

VANE. (*aside*) Calmly! does she call it? If this is a specimen of her calmness, I should not like to deal with her when she is in a passion.

MRS. G. Tell me all about the appointment you said you heard my husband make at the ball last night.

VANE. I beg your pardon, I never said anything of the kind.

MRS. G. Oh! yes you did. Besides, how could you have been sure that Mr. Glanvil would not be home this morning, if you had not known that he had promised to meet Mrs. Hargrave?

VANE. Mrs. Hargrave?

MRS. G. You are frank with me at last, and I thank you for telling me that she is my rival. I would rather know the worst at once.

VANE. Oh! this is too much; I never even hinted at such a thing.

MRS. G. Yes you did, and it was the act of a true friend. Surely you have no reason to be afraid of trusting me with a secret.

VANE. I'm not. I've lots of secrets, all my own exclusive personal property, which I'll confide to you with the greatest possible pleasure. There's an intensely romantic one to begin with—how I was jilted by my first love. She was just turned nine, wore her hair in beautiful long-plaited tails down her back, with big bows of ribbon at the end, and threw me over for another boy, who had twopennee a week more pocket money. I'll tell you all the particulars.

MRS. G. Yes, yes, some other time; but now let me know all about the appointment my husband made with Mrs. Hargrave for—for——

VANE. For ten o'clock this morning.

MRS. G. (*rises and crosses to R.*) So! my suspicions were not groundless after all.

VANE. (*rises, comes down L.*) By Jove! this bewitching creature is too much for me; she gets everything out of me whether I will or no.

MRS. G. But where are they to meet—tell me instantly where they are to meet.

VANE. I can't recollect—in point of fact, I don't think I heard.

MRS. G. Do you take me for a child, to be duped by such shallow devices? I shall go there myself, and you shall accompany me.

VANE. You really will allow me to escort you? My dear madam, I accept the boon with rapture. (*goes up for hat, comes down again, aside*) With my powers of conversation, and my knowledge of London topography, I can answer for it that she'll be a deuce of a time getting from Berkeley Square to Knightsbridge.

MRS. G. But where is it? you must and shall tell me.

VANE. (*seeing GLANVIL open door R.—aside*) Glanvil here! although she told me—I begin to perceive that I'm in for a pleasant morning.

Enter GLANVIL, door R., comes down.

GLAN. (*R. C., as he enters, without seeing the others*). Luckily I have managed to get rid of them, for it is long past the time, and her letter—(*sees VANE*) Mr. Vane! This is indeed a surprise.

VANE. (L. C.) Well, yes; you see, the fact is, I came—that is to say I was going—just for a constitutional, you know, in an omnibus, when it struck me I might as well drop in to—because—that's just how it happened. (*aside*) I feel that I must be looking at this moment the picture of imbecility.

MRS. G. (C.) You see that Mr. Vane is a little astonished, and it is only natural, for he believed you were not at home.

GLAN. Indeed! and why?

VANE. I assure you I——

MRS. G. There is no need to make any mystery about it. He felt convinced that you had gone to keep an appointment with some one, who is no doubt waiting anxiously for you at this very moment.

VANE. You really must allow me to explain.

GLAN. Well, sir?

VANE. It's all a misapprehension, from first to last, a pure misapprehension. (*aside*) I wish that fireplace was a station of the Underground Railway, I would not ask for a return ticket.

MRS. G. Mr. Vane became aware of it in the strangest manner; but as you had not mentioned the matter to me, I should have doubted the accuracy of his information—for of course you have no secrets from your wife—if he had not received it from the very individual who is now expecting you with impatience.

GLAN. Impossible! (*sternly*) Mr. Vane, will you have the goodness to clear up this mystery?

VANE. (*crosses to R.C., MRS. GLANVIL crosses to L.*) With all the pleasure in life. The simple truth is that—it was a great liberty, no doubt, and I offer you twenty thousand apologies, but I don't deny that I said to Mrs. Glanvil in the most casual manner, just as if I had been talking about the weather or the Schleswig Holstein question, or the Bank rate of discount, or any other subject that one chats about with a lady, to kill time—really in the most casual manner possible—I remarked to her “supposing,” you'll be good enough to bear in mind that it was a mere supposition, in fact the vaguest conceivable supposition—“Supposing your husband had gone out alone this morning, why then——” I believe that was the extent of my observations.

GLAN. I hope so, for you must feel that if some extraordinary chance had placed you in possession of information respecting private affairs of mine, which in no wise concerned you, your abuse of that accident would deserve to be characterised by a much stronger epithet than imprudent.

VANE. Of course, my dear Mr. Glanvil, I am perfectly aware of that, and I beg you to believe that nothing on earth would ever induce me to reveal——

MRS. G. What you know about this appointment.

VANE. What I know about it? I'm sure I never said that I knew anything at all about it.

GLAN. (*in a low tone to VANE*) That's right.

MRS. G. (*who has overheard the last line*) Of course I have no doubt you think so.

VANE. (*looking alternately at GLANVIL and MRS. GLANVIL, and bursting into a forced laugh*) Ha, ha, ha—well, you really do keep up the joke admirably. But I hope you don't mean to go on much longer making me a shuttlecock between you two battledores, for I'm getting rather tired of the game.

MRS. G. For my part, I shall say no more. If there is a secret let it remain one, I do not care to learn it.

VANE. (*aside*) That's a comfort. I feel like a drowning man when he gets a firm grip of the life-buoy.

MRS. G. But I must go and put on my bonnet, for I have a visit to pay.

GLAN. Indeed!

MRS. G. Yes—to, Mrs. Hargrave!

GLAN. Mrs. Hargrave?

VANE. (*aside*) I've lost my hold again, and plump I go once more into the mud at the bottom.

MRS. G. But don't put yourself out of the way on my account. If you would rather not accompany me——

GLAN. I shall be very glad if you'll excuse me, I don't care about going out this morning. (*sits, L. of table R., aside*) I wonder whether she suspects?

MRS. G. (*up, L.*) It does not at all matter, for Mr. Vane was kind enough just now to offer me his arm.

VANE. (*L. C.*) Eh?

GLAN. (*aside to VANE*) I forbid you to stir a step with her.

VANE. (*aside*) This is pleasant; I'm caught in a cleft stick. (*aloud*) I should be delighted, my dear madam, but really——

MRS. G. (*L.*) What! you refuse?

VANE. (*C. enthusiastically*) Refuse to escort you? Perish the thought. (*recollecting himself*) Of course I don't refuse—but I can't do it. I've some most pressing business on hand. That box on the ears I got last night is preying on my damask cheek like any number of worms in the bud, and I must punch Mr. Arthur Winslow's head without the slightest delay. (*goes up*)

GLAN. Of course, in such matters promptitude is everything.

MRS. G. But, surely, it would not take you long to see me as far as Mrs. Hargrave's.

VANE. (*L. C.*) It's no use going to her house, you won't find her at home.

GLAN. (*aside to VANE*) Hush!

MRS. G. (*aside*) That is not where they were to meet.

VANE. (*aside*) I'm making a mess of it. What business had I to say that?

MRS. G. (*watching GLANVIL*) Well, then, take me to her sister's; perhaps she's there.

GLAN. To be sure, it's the most likely thing in the world.

MRS. G. (*aside*) It is not there! (*aloud*) No, no! take me to the house where I shall find her now.

VANE. (*going up, C.*) You really must excuse me, but I haven't a moment to spare, and I'm going to call on Mr. Arthur Winslow, who lives in the Albamy.

MRS. G. (*who has gone near to GLANVIL, and is watching him closely*) Well, from Berkeley Square that is your nearest way.

VANE. What! through Knightsbridge?

GLAN. (*aside, rising*) Confound his tongue!

MRS. G. (*aside*) Knightsbridge. Ah! the old woman's—it must be there.

VANE. (*aside*) I've done it now, and no mistake. (*aloud*) Of course you understand that when I say Knightsbridge, it's just the same as if I were to say Putney Bridge, or London Bridge, or the Bridge of Sighs, or any other bridge which is not my road to the place I am going to. (*aside*) It's clear she does not understand anything of the sort. That husband of hers will massacre me. (*goes up, C.*)

MRS. G. You won't be angry with me for leaving you, Alfred, not quite alone though, for I dare say Mr. Vane, in spite of his urgent business, will be able to spare you half an hour; besides, it will be so pleasant to you to know that I am taking your place beside Martha.

VANE. (*comes down, C.*) Martha! why that's not the Christian name of Mrs.—

GLAN. (*aside to VANE*) Hold your tongue, idiot!

VANE. (*aside*) Idiot! There'll be somebody else's head to punch after I've operated upon Mr. Arthur Winslow. (*crosses to L.*)

MRS. G. You are quite right, Mr. Vane, Martha is not Mrs. Hargrave, but a bedridden old woman, who lodges in a garret at Knightsbridge, one of Mr. Glanvil's pensioners, to whom he and some of his friends, no doubt, can always pay visits, with a little money to give away, and be sure of a welcome. Very charitable, isn't it? and so convenient.

GLAN. (*goes up—aside*) She has guessed the place—I had better tell her the truth at once. (*aloud*) Clara!

MRS. G. (*at door, C.*) No, I can't stop to talk now—some other time. Think of poor Martha's impatience! (*aside*) At last I shall grapple with my rival face to face. *Exit* MRS. GLANVIL, C.

VANE. (*aside*) So, she leaves me closeted with her husband. This is getting rather too warm to be pleasant.

GLAN. Well, sir, I hope you are proud of your handiwork?

VANE. My handiwork? What the deuce are you talking about?

GLAN. (*looking at door, L., seizing him by the wrist*) Silence, as you value your life!

VANE. Fiddlesticks! don't think I am to be intimidated by big words. It's no fault of mine if your wife has a knack of saying things out of her own head, and then fathering them upon somebody else. I never said anything except once, and then she wormed it out of me as artfully and quietly as if she had been drawing a tooth under chloroform.

GLAN. Your silly tattling has perhaps destroyed the peace of my home. What excuse is it that she prompted you to speak when you should have held your tongue? You were not obliged to allow yourself to be led by the nose like a fool.

VANE. Stop a minute! that's the second highly offensive substantive you have coupled with my name in the course of a very short space of time, and according to all established usages I should be fully justified in knocking you down; but though I'm not muscular I'm merciful, more especially as it's clear to me that just at this moment you're a trifle out of your mind. When the pair of you get me in here and make me the sole ball in a game of croquet, how can I help it if a dexterous blow of her mace sends me just where you didn't want me to go? But there, it's no use talking about it now—it's done, and can't be mended.

GLAN. Yes it can, and you must repair your own wrongdoing.

VANE. The deuce I must; and who is to force me to do it?

GLAN. Your own conscience; for your thoughts have grievously slandered a noble heart. But it is not yet too late—you must follow my wife, give her your arm, engage her in conversation, lead her by the most roundabout way you can think of, and make it as late as possible before she reaches Knightsbridge.

VANE. Yes, yes, I understand; you want me to keep her out of the way. That's a pretty line of business to ask an honest man to undertake—declined with thanks.

GLAN. On my honour, I swear to you that your suspicions are baseless. Go—there is not a moment to be lost, if you wish to repair the mischief you have wrought.

VANE. (*aside*) Upon my soul, he seems to be in earnest. Suppose my chivalrous devotion to one innocent woman has got another into a pickle. That will never do. (*aloud*) I take you at your word. (*goes up, C.*) I'll obey your orders to the letter. (*aside*) At any rate, there'll be a walk with a pretty woman, and that's a perquisite.

Exit VANCE, C.

GLAN. (*sits at table, R.*) How will this end? If Vane plays me false, and Clara finds Mrs. Hargrave at the place, which she fancies is the scene of a guilty rendezvous, I tremble to think of what must follow. (*rises*) Why had I not courage to tell her the whole innocent truth, to clear up the mystery which, spite of myself, has gathered round this meeting? But no; her inveterate jealousy would not have allowed her to believe me. Besides, the secret is not my own, and it seems to be a grave one, for the letter which I received just now from Mrs. Hargrave, urging me to hasten to her without a moment's delay, is couched in a tone of terror and anxiety of which I strive in vain to guess the cause. There is only one hope left—if I can manage to reach the place of meeting before Clara. (*takes up hat, and goes towards door, C.—starts back on seeing MRS. HARGRAVE*) You here!

Enter MRS. HARGRAVE, C.

MRS. H. (*supporting herself against the doorway*) Yes, I could wait no longer; I was half dead with impatience and alarm.

GLAN. (*goes to window and looks out*) But consider, if Clara should chance to find you here!

MRS. H. Is she at home? Oh, don't let her see me. I know what she would think, and what she would say.

GLAN. (R. C.) You need not alarm yourself; she has gone out. I can see her now turning the corner of the square.

(*comes down*)

MRS. H. (*sinking into an arm chair near the door, C., takes off bonnet and shawl*) I'm almost worn out with excitement and suspense; every minute seemed an age, while I was waiting for you, and it is now long past the time when you promised me you would be there.

GLAN. You must not blame me for the delay; I was detained by an unexpected visit from your husband.

MRS. H. Indeed!

GLAN. Yes, he brought with him Mr. Charles Verner.

MRS. H. (L. C., *rises and comes down*) Mr. Verner! It is about him that I wish to speak to you.

GLAN. (R. C.) There is strange emotion in the tone in which you pronounce that young man's name. Surely it cannot be possible that you——

MRS. H. Listen to me, Alfred. It was upon the faith of an friendship that I appealed to you when I needed a counsellor who could guide me wisely and well, because he knew my heart, and had firm faith in its integrity. Do not make me leave this house with the feeling that I misplaced my trust.

GLAN. Pray, forgive me. I scarcely knew what I was saying. (*aside*) How strangely agitated she seems.

MRS. H. You remember last evening that in consequence of Mr. Verner's quarrel with Mr. Arthur Winslow, it would be necessary for him to resign his situation in that house, and that he had serious thoughts of sending him to Australia. The prospect of being separated from him for ever is breaking his mother's heart.

GLAN. (*surprised*) His mother! He does not know whether she is alive.

MRS. H. No! but I do. She lives, and her whole being is centred in her son.

GLAN. You know her then?

MRS. H. Yes, she is an old and dear friend of mine—possibly you know her too, and if you could be witness to her anguish, her despair, you would pity her as fervently as I do.

GLAN. Well, but if she is his mother why does not she avow her relationship to him, and prevent him from being sent abroad?

MRS. H. She dare not, for with the secret of his birth is entangled that of a crime.

GLAN. A crime?

MRS. H. Yes, an odious, treacherous crime, but one to which she was only an unwilling accessory. Years ago, when she was too little versed in the world's ways to distinguish the heart's pure gold from its base counterfeit, she met, when travelling with her father, in the south of France, a man who turned her young head with his flattery, and who seemed the realization of a girl's romantic dream. She became his wife, but then when it was too late she was told that she had linked her fate with that of a gambler—nay, worse, of a man who shrank from no means however vile by which he could prey upon his fellows. At last, before the honeymoon was over, resolved to know the worst, she tracked him to the infamous den which was his nightly haunt. There was a strange hum of angry voices as she crossed the threshold of the gaming room, then a sudden flash—a loud report—a shriek! The detected cheat had done justice upon himself, dying by his own hand within the walls which had witnessed his latest crime; and when the young wife looked down she saw that her way was barred by the dead body of her husband. (*goes up to table after a momentary pause*) That man was the father of Charles Verner.

GLAN. Poor girl! what a terrible awakening from her dream of joy.

MRS. H. (C.) Was it not! But the worst has yet to be told. The villain had not only borrowed from her father so largely as to reduce him almost to absolute poverty, he had induced him to assist in negotiating bills, which seemed genuine, but which the dead man's papers too clearly proved to be for-

geries. There was no resource but flight. The wretched widow hurried with her father to an obscure hiding place, and remained there till the birth of her son left her free to return to England, where the story of her marriage was told to none, and the boy was placed under the care of a guardian, who received funds for his maintenance and education, but knew nothing of his history. Before long, a friend, dear to her from early childhood, but who had been absent for years, came home, and soon declared himself her lover. Her heart warmed towards him with honest and pure affection; how then could she fail to shrink with horror from the treachery of concealing from him the past? But her father commanded her to accept the husband who proffered himself, and to keep the secret, upon which depended his own liberty and good name. She begged, she implored that before becoming again a wife, she might disclose her previous marriage and claim her son. For a moment he made no answer, then falling on his knees with clasped hands and streaming eyes, he besought her by the memory of her mother, by the love she bore her child, to save her father's life and honour. What could she do but yield? Now, I need not tell you why her name is a secret, my lips must never breathe. (*crosses to L. and sits on sofa dejectedly*)

GLAN. But if I remember rightly, Mr. Verner's guardian, on his deathbed, confided the care of his ward to Mr. Hargrave. Why not tell to your husband this mournful tale?

MRS. H. (*rises*) My husband! Not for all the world would I—(*recollecting herself*) would she permit a syllable of the story to be breathed to him. I am certain if she learned that Philip, or your wife knew what I have told you here, to-day, it would be her death-blow. So she has sent me to you, whose kindly, generous nature we both know so well, to implore you to be our friend, (*clasps his hand*) our adviser, our helper in this hour of bitter need. You will not refuse us, I am sure—you feel as we do, that the soul will have no cause to mourn over that page in its last account, which is blessed by a mother's grateful tears.

GLAN. Refuse you! certainly not. I will try to make him my bosom friend, my house shall ever be his home.

MRS. H. Oh, thank you, thank you, and you will let me talk to you about him now and then, won't you. I can tell her what you say of him, and each kind word about her boy will be a solace to her poor aching heart.

GLAN. Of course I will, but it does not seem as if I should have a chance of seeing much of him, for the purpose of your husband's visit this morning, was to remind me that he had asked me last night to give young Verner a letter of recommendation to my brother in Melbourne.